

A
S E R M O N

Preached before the

K I N G

A T

C H E S T E R,

O N

AUGUST xxviii. 1687.

Being the FEAST of

S. A U G U S T I N,

Doctor of the Holy

Catholic Church.

By the Reverend Father, LEWIS SABRAN, of the
Society of Jesus.

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3 E R M O M

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2 TIM. IV. vii.

Bonum certamen certavi, cursum consum-
mavi, fidem servavi.

*I have fought a good Fight, consummated my
Race, kept my Faith.*



His Character, Most Sacred Majesty, of an undaunted and unwearied Courage, meeting Victory at last through all the Oppositions weak Nature can dread, and faint under; of a steady and unalterable fixure in the Resolution once taken of serving God; of an even and punctual Fidelity to his holy Grace; as it is the noblest, so certainly it doth but Justice either to the great Apostle S. *Paul*, or to the great Doctor S. *Augustin*, whose Feast the holy Catholic Church solemnizes this day: since 'tis given to the first by the Holy Ghost, moving his Pen, when he writ it, against all the Opposition his Humility could make; And applied to the second by that Church, which is ever guided by the same unerring Holy Spirit. 'Tis no wonder one Character should serve them both, the one having been so exact a Copy of the other. Nature had with an equally liberal Hand richly qualified both; Education had refined their eminent Parts, by an equally deep Knowledge in all Human Literature; they oppos'd alike the Church of God, the one with the Sword of Persecution, the other with his sharper and more dreadful Logic; both

*Pauli sevitia fil-
vestre erat victum;
sed magnæ fertili-
tatis erat indic-
um. l. 22. c. 70. some
Fault.*

Namquid hoc est
intra in gaudium
domini tui, L. 9. c.
10. *conf.*

Toto mentis affe-
ctu beatissimæ
virginis
nos interces-
sionibus commit-
tamus. &c. Serm.
35 de Sarc.

mis-led by a blind and stormy Zeal, which yet argued their Abilities, though misapplied. Their Conversion was the immediate Work of Heaven, both being retrieved by its miraculous Voice; their Learning inspired by the same Spirit (though not in a like Degree of Certainty) guided all Christian Divines in the Schools; by their Tongues the Spirit of God spoke most efficaciously in their respective Ages, from the Pulpit; their Writings have disarmed all Heretics and Schismatics that ever opposed the Church to this Day; by their Apostolical Labors they outwent so far all those of their different Ranks, that each could say with a just Title, I have laboured more than all; a Love of God frequently heightened into Raptures and Extasies, equally inflamed both: They both had a Foretaste here below of Heavenly Bliss; in a Word, They were *first the most absolute miraculous Conquest, and then the most victorious Champions of the Grace of God.* That I may the better set out S. *Augustin* in both these Capacities, to Gods greater Glory in him, and to your larger Spiritual Comfort and Benefit (Christian Auditors) joyn, I crave, your Prayers with mine to obtain the Succor of that Divine Grace: If I presume not to present them, without taking along the joynt Intercession of the Mother of God, I follow therein the Advice of S. *Augustin*, which I address to you in his Words; *Let us by the most tender Application of our whole Heart, recommend our selves to the most Blessed Virgin's Intercession; let us all, with the greatest eagerness, strive to obtain her Protection; that whilst with Assiduity we pay her our Devotions on Earth, she may intercede for us in Heaven by her earnest Prayers; for undoubtedly she who brought forth the Price of Redemption, hath the greatest Right to intercede for those who are redeemed.*

Ave

Ave Maria.

Lest the Offers I seem to make at a Panegyric, should dull the Attention of any in my Auditory, led by that common Apprehension, Either that Sermons of Saints are like their vulgar Pictures which bear their Names indeed, and some Symbols of them, but have in Lieu of their proper natural Features, such only as are borrowed from the Painters Fancy; or that such sublime Vertues only and rare Gifts of God are treated of in them, as lying far out of the Road and Reach of most Christians, are of little Use for their Instruction and Edification: to correct, I say, a Mistake that would so far prejudice, and even defeat my whole Design, give me Leave first to protest, That I will not in this Discourse even hint at any thing concerning this Saint, but what he owns of himself in his Writings: His Humility having prompted him to lay open all his Faults and Weakness in some of them; and in others, that Seraphic Love which ever moved his Heart to a grateful Return of Thanks, having often unwarily betrayed what singular Graces and Gifts he possessest, *That the Mercy and Justice of God might receive due Praise, and Mens Minds and Hearts be raised to give it, by the Knowledge of Gods Favors and of his Sins.* Again, the only Mark I level at, being Gods greater Glory in this his Saint, the Fight and Victory I mean to speak of, is of the Divine Mercy and Grace, setting his Free-will in that happy Liberty of the Children of God, conquering in and with it; of that Divine Vertue which borrows its greatest Lustre from human Weakness and Corruption. All therefore that I shall offer to your Attention will serve for an Encouragement to the very Weakest, and shew even to those who are farthest from God, the Way and Method how to return to him, by yielding themselves a Conquest to his holy Grace. If I insist much

De bonis meis, &
de malis meis
Deum laudant,
bonum & justum,
atque in eum ex-
citant humanum
intellectum & af-
fectum l. 2. retract.
c. 6.
Non ego sed
gratia Dei mecum.

Confels. l. 8. c. 3.

on those strange Oppositions which this blessed Saint before his Conversion raised within himself against that Grace which called him to the true Church, and to an eminent degree of Piety in it, I hope it will contribute the more to my Auditories Instruction and Comfort; for as the Saint himself teaches me, *Healtb Creates a greater Joy when restored after a desperate Disease, and Safety when it succeeds the most pressing Dangers.*—— God himself is represented rejoicing more at the Conversion of one Sinner, than for the perseverance of Ninety Nine Just:—— And if any part of Holy Writ draws Tears of sensible Comfort from our Eyes, and softens our Hearts with a feeling Tenderness, 'tis when we read the solemn Feast in the House of that merciful Father at the Return of his untoward Prodigal Child, who had perisht, and was now found, had been dead, and was now revived. S. *Augustin* till the Age of Thirty Four Years, was out of the true Church, and Favor of God, plung'd into Heresie and Vice. The haughty Perverseness of his Understanding swell'd up with the proud Conceit of his own Parts, opposed it self to Gods Grace, offering the Light of a true Faith: Worldly Interest, and the Corruption of his Heart sway'd by vicious Inclinations, withstood the same Grace, offering the true Comforts of Vertue and Piety; Grace conquered at last, joyned with his Free-will, and so posselt the whole Soul of *Augustin*, that he continued an even Course of Vertue the rest of his Life, by being Faithful to the conquering Grace he had yielded himself unto. These two Victories of Gods Grace, bringing *Augustin's* Understanding and Heart to a due Submission and constant Fidelity, whereby he hath a just Claim to my Text; are the two Points of this Discourse, and of Your Royal Majesties most gracious Attention. That true Religion, or the Worship which God requires at our Hand, is sufficiently revealed to all Mankind, by him who is the Light that enlighthens each Man that comes into this World; that

that the true Churches Voice, which all are bound to hear- Mat. 16 & 18.
 ken unto, and obey, may easily be heard, and distinguish-
 ed; that the House of God, in which alone those Sa-
 craments are dispensed, which convey to us a plenti-
 ful Redemption, and work together with us our Sal-
 vation, is like a City seated on a Hill, exposed to the
 View of all; that the Way which God hath markt
 us out to walk in towards Heaven, is easily found out,
 and followed, so that Fools shall not go astray in it, Mat. 35.
 and consequently is discernible by its Infallible Secu-
 rity; are Truths which Faith teaches us, and even
 Reason evinces to any who shall acknowledg in God a
 Providence and a merciful Goodness. How then be-
 falls it, that so many wander in Darkness though sur-
 rounded by that Light, fail to hear this Churches
 Voice, miss to see this City, err in finding this way?
 But how could this happen to an *Augustin*, so that
 for Twenty Years he should persevere in an Heresie
 the most wicked and senseless, that ever infected Man-
 kind? Some you will say are strangely dull, especially
 in the Concerns of Piety. True, but as the learned
 World hath ever owned, he had so soaring and search-
 ing an Understanding, that Heaven never gave so sub-
 lime a Wit to any Mortal before, seeming to exhaust
 it's Treasury in enriching his Mind, Nature at least
 emptied hers in perfecting him. So few cultivate their
 Wit by Studies! I allow it; but whose was ever po-
 lished with such Industry, improved with such Dili-
 gence as S. *Augustins*? "What did it avail me, saith
 he of himself, "that I read and without the help of
 "a Master understood all the Books that treated
 "of Liberal Sciences, whilst I remained a dull Slave
 "to my vitious Inclinations? My Back was turned to
 "the true Light, I read by it other things, but ne-
 "ver cast back my Eyes to fix them on it. I had a
 "quick and sharp Wit; it was your Gift my God, but
 "I sacrificed no Share of it to you; it was a part of
 "my Misery that I like the prodigal Child had in my
 "own

Scientiam Augu-
 stino cœlum dedite:
 super
 omnes homines,
 &c. *Avicen.*
 Fecisse naturam
 extremum effe-
 ctum suæ potentie
 dum *Augustini*-
 num creavit
 ingenium. *Alb.*
mag.
 Confess. l. 4. c. 16.

own Hands and proper Disposal, that rich Portion of my Inheritance, whilst I used not those Abilities in your Service, but withdrew from you my God into a foreign Land. Possibly being born and bred up in Error, he met with none that could lay it open to him: On the contrary, he was born of a most pious Catholic Mother, he had felt in his Youth most pressing Inclinations to Piety, he had since heard the ablest Divines of Gods Church in *Africa* and *Italy*. Perhaps he was little concerned to find out the Truth, and little regarded the Proofs of it that were offered him: he assures us that for Eleven years at least, he burnt with an incredible Desire of the Knowledge of Eternal Truth, which during that Time buoyed him up and raised him toward the God he sought. That he eagerly wished for Wings to quit this World, and soar to that true Wisdom which dwells only in God, All this perchance was only a vain Curiosity in one, who felt no Sense of Piety, no Spark of Devotion: "My Heart, says he, had sunk in with my Mothers Milk, a tender Devotion for the Name of my Redeemer, it had sunk deeply there, what ever I read of the Name of Jesus was not set in it, how smooth and learned it ever were, seemed insipid and relished not. It may be that he refused to use Means proportioned to the finding of the Truth: No, he neglected but one, he used all the rest. If reading be useful to that End, he left no Book unread; if consulting private Men, he dealt with the most eminent of all persuasions, and was deceived by some who had always in their Mouths *the Lord, the Spirit, the Truth*: "Such were their Words, says he, but their Heart was empty; my Soul did inwardly sigh to thee my God, whilst they deceived me with an Empty Sound of thy Name.— Unhappy me, by what large Steps did I sink into the depth of Hell! But sure he read not the Holy Text of Scripture: He did, but to little Purpose, *Behold, says he, I saw there something covered*

and

Immortalitatem
sapientie concu-
piscbam zetu
cordis incredibili
Conf. l. 3. c. 4.

Ibidem.

Confel. l. 3. c. 5.

and veiled to the Proud, and not open, not naked to Children: Low in appearance, but that soared high, and was wrapped up in Mysteries: The Light it gave, might have increased and grown with a little one, but I disdained to be a little One: That is, I scorned to be taught my Book, to hear any Interpreter of it. Blessed God! such Parts employed! such Means used! so long a Search so studiously continued! and discovered he not the true Religion? So far from it, that he acknowledges he came to be of no Religion, and even to doubt whether God had assigned any Way to eternal Life, which could be found out. Were it possible to discover what blockt up his Way in the search after Truth? I observe in him three Letts that perfectly obstructed it. First, He was prepossessed with a fixed Perswasion, That the Catholic Church had erred. He began to suspect, and even to hate the Heretics, of whose Congregation he was; yet they being many, their Multitude retarded his Diligence in enquiring farther, Because he despaired that Truth could be found in your Church, O Lord of Heaven and Earth. Such was the Aversion from it they had prevented him with. You brought me to Ambrose without any Knowledge in me of your Design, says he, which was, that by true Knowledge he might bring me to you; I loved and valued him, but not as a Teacher of Truth; for I despaired of finding any such in your Church. Secondly, Besides that general Prejudice he nourisht, he misrepresented to himself the particular Tenets of the Church, and then hated and reviled the ugly Idol of his own carving. If ever, saith he, my Soul lifted up and moved her self towards the Catholic Faith, I was soon driven back; for alas! Catholic Faith was not that which I took it to be. Thirdly, He was willing to be convinced, but not to believe; to see, but not to submit his Understanding to Faith: He sought a clear Evidence, and such as should not controul his usual Apprehension, or oppose his Senses, as if they had been fit Judges of the Objects of Faith, revealed Truths.

Ecce video tem
non comperam
superbis, neque
nudatam pueris
sed inaccessa humi-
lem successu ex-
cellam, & velatum
mysteriis, &c.
ibidem.

Inveniri posse
viam vite minime
parabam. Conf. l. 6
c. 1.

L. 4. Conf. c. 10,
& 13.

Valeendo animas
meas quas utique
nisi credendo sa-
nari non poterat,
ne falsa crederet
sanari recusabat,
#cc. Conf. l. 6. c. 1.

Quid sum ego
mihi sine te nisi
dux in præceptis, &
quis homo est
quilibet homo
cum sit homo!
Conf. l. 1. c. 4.

I 7. conf. c. 5.

Idem. c. 11.

My sick Soul, says he, *could not be cured but by Believing, and for fear of being surprized, and made to believe what might be false, I refused to admit of a Cure; I was resolved either to see things, or if I could not, to conceive them as evidently as that Seven and Three make up Ten.* It was on these his Three mistaken Methods that he reflected afterwards, when sighing he said, *What am I to my self but a Guide leading into a Precipice? What a sad Man, is each Man, when he is but one Man?* That is, when he is left to his own Private Sense, abandoned to his own Judgment. Was it possible that Gods Grace, had it been less than Omnipotent, should prevail against these stubborn Ill-dispositions of his Mind? Long was the Combat, violent the Strife, but Grace conquered at last, and by this Method gained the Field. *First*, God by a particular Light convinced him, That Religion was not Opinion, but Faith; not a calling of things Divine to the Test of our weak Judgment, and carnal Senses; but a captivating of our Understanding, and humbly sacrificing it to the Divine Truth. *Next*, he observed how numerable those things were, which he believed, though he had never seen them; How he had ever adored God, and owned his Providence, though he knew not what a Kind of Substance he was, nor what Way led unto or from him. *I thought on these Things*, says he, *and you were present to me, I was carried away by restless Waves, and you governed and steered my Course, I sighed, and you heard me.* Then he resolves to seek more narrowly. "Let Time be assigned, says he, let some Hours be allotted to the Study of that great Science, How I shall save my Soul. Let all Vain and Empty Concerns perish, and all my Thoughts and Endeavors be spent in the sole Pursuit of Truth; this Life at best is but Toylsome and Miserable, Death certain and at Hand, if it surprizes whither do we go? He presently applied himself seriously to an humble Search after a Guide to Truth; when favoured with a new Light from

from Heaven, he cries out, *Conceive better Hopes my Soul, the Catholic Faith doth not teach what we Believe, and fondly accused her of.* Thus disposed, and weighing with a due Attention the Articles of the Catholic Belief, he owns his Heart was filled with Joy, and his Face covered with Shame, to see how profanely he had strove so many Years, not against Catholic Faith, as he conceived, but against his own Dreams, how Rash he had been, and equally Impious: *That whereas he should with Submission have learnt from the Church, that which she held, he fastened on her what he pleased, and accused her of it.* He reads next Holy Scripture, with the due deference he owed to that Churches Interpretation, owning there is no Text of Scripture into which a false Gloss may not Foist an Error; that the Letter ever kills, when severed from the Spirit which ought to quicken; that the very misapplying a Text, otherwise truly Interpreted, is the most dangerous Weapon that a tempting Devil could use, to deceive, even if possible, Truth it self, with an *It is written*; that stubbornly to maintain our own Fancy to be the Word of God, because we uphold it by a forced Text, is to set up the greatest Abomination of Desolation in the House of God, an Idol upon his Altar; and to adore it by the worst of Idolatries, Self-worship; proudly challenging as our own, what Christ only could bequeath, and left to his Church, to each Member as united to the whole, the Spirit of Truth, who alone must Interpret what he Dictated alone: On which score Christ left as a *Depositum* in the same Hands of the Church, the Letter and the Spirit, the Book and the Sense, the Word and the Truth, to be delivered to all succeeding Ages by the same Authority, because the separating of the one from the other, would turn the most wholsom Food of our Souls to present Poison; whence Heresies have had their birth, from good Scriptures ill understood, and from the bold and rash asserting of such Errors. So that this only is the holy Method to be followed, that what we find in Scripture con-

Et o quippe temerarius & impius fueram, quod ea quæ debebam querenda discere, accusando dicebam. l. 6. Conf.

Nulla scriptura est quæ non apud illos qui eam non intelligunt, possit reprehendi. l. 1. de gen. contra Manich.

Neque enim nate sunt hæreses nisi dum scripturæ bene intelliguntur non bene, & quod in iis non bene intelligitur etiam temere & audacter asseritur.

Tract. 18. in Jo.

Quod secundum
sanam fidei regu-
lam intelligere
non poterimus,
dubitationem ac-
feramus, intelli-
gentiam dissera-
mus. *Ibid.*

Aliud est de sil-
vestri cacumine
videre patriam
pacis, & iter ad
eam non invenire
& frustra consi-
per in via: aliud
viam tenere illuc
ducentem cura
coelestis impera-
toris militum.
Conf. l. 8. c. 1.

*Lib. 8. cap. 1.
Conf.*

Catholica deli-
catur Ecclesia &
dilect ego dormio
& cor meum vi-
gilat. Quid est,
nisi, ita quiesco
ut audiam.
Tract. 25. in 70.

Epist. 56.

formable with the Faith we have received, we feed on it; but when any part thereof appears not uniform with that Rule, that it create in us no Doubts, but only an humble persuasion that we understand not yet such a Scripture. He had scarce receiv'd this Light, when behold all his Doubts rais'd before by the same Lecture, disappeared, all those seeming Contradictions vanish'd; whence he was perfectly convinced, that the Catholic Church was the unerring Guide to be followed by all the Disciples of Christ. He expresses the difference of this present Submission, from that former Search into Scripture without this Guide, under the Comparison of two Travellers, whereof the one climbs up a high Tree indeed, and sees thence the Place he would go to, but then ranges blindly in the thick Wood; whilst the other walks securely in a Way leading right thither, without fear or danger of going astray; a large Royal Way, made and kept by the Providence of the King of Heaven. Then observing how all pious humble Catholics, tho' never so plain and illiterate Men, enjoyed as a Birthright that Happiness, the Search whereof had been so dangerous, the Purchase so painful to him; What want, O Lord (said he,) what want did your Little-ones feel of a deep and quick Wit? How much did this Dullness of theirs injure them? *Whilst they were carried in your Arms, and rested in the Nest of the Catholic Church, enlarging the Wings of their Charity, and strengthening them by the Food of a sound Faith; chosen for, and brought to them without their labor? Happy Men, who enjoy a perfect Rest, while their whole Duty is to hearken.* Behold the final Victory of Grace over the Pride of Human Wit, captivated to Faith, our Self sufficiency humbled under the Tutoring Discipline and Direction of the Church. No wonder if this Saint afterwards us'd no other Method in reconciling mis'd Heretics to Truth, but that by which Gods Grace had retriev'd him from his Errors, the infallible Authority of a Guiding Church. He advis'd Unlearned Men in general, to relie altogether, and lean on the Authority of the Church: He minded the most Learned, who

who feared to be deceived, where Truth seemed to them but obscurely revealed, to consult the Church, which the holy Scriptures point out without ambiguity; assuring them, that (even in Fundamental Articles, of as immediate necessity as Baptism is, where Scripture mentions nothing thereof) *the very Truth of Scriptures is followed, whilst that is done which the Catholic Church declares for, and with reason, since we receive, said he, the Books of the Old and New Testament in the same number that the Authority of the Catholic Church hath Sealed and Delivered up to us; since I would not give any credit to the Gospel, if the Authority of the Catholic Church moved me not to it: whatever Doubts there arise, not to yield to the Church, 'tis the utmost Impiety, the most loose Arrogancy: "For whether in her*
"most general, necessary and first Principles, or in re-
"mostest Truths leading to solid Devotion; whether in
"her Milk or in her Bread; the Church alone possesses
"Truth. Those then who have their Belief yet to choose,
"who begin a serious Search into Religion, desiring to
"know to which they are to commit their Souls for In-
"struction, they must, without any Doubt, begin with
"the Catholic Church: If they have been wavering in
"their Mind, and desire to put an end to their toil in
"seeking, let them follow the Way of Catholic Disci-
"pline, which as it is derived from Jesus Christ to us
"by the Apostles, so must it be transmitted to our Poste-
"rity in succeeding Ages. We must receive our Faith
from that Church, as the first converted to Christianity
received it from the Apostles, and they from Christ. Her
Authority being once established by the same Proofs which
the Apostles offered for theirs, our whole Work is to em-
brace what God teaches by her Voice, tho' it be above the
level and reach of Human Reason: "For before our
"Minds be cleared from that Dullness which Sin hath left
"in it, that especially of Infidelity, we must believe what
"we cannot yet understand, the Prophet having most truly
*"said, *Without you believe, you shall not understand; for**
"Faith is delivered in the Church in very few words, in
"which

Fo. 7. li' contra
crefco. c. 33;

Fo. 10. Serm. 191.
de tempore.

Fo. 6. l. contra
Epist. fund. c. 5.

Ad honor. de u-
til. Cred. c. 17.
Fo. 6.

Contra Faust.
1. 15. c. 3. in
Fo. 6.

De util. Cred.
c. 7. & 8.

Christus miracu-
lis conciliavit au-
thoritatem aucto-
ritate meruit si-
dem. De util.
cred. c. 14.

Domino coope-
rante & sermo-
nem confirmante
sequentibus sig-
nis. Marc. ult.

De agone Chrono-
c. 13.

In Psalm.

In Psalm 130.

Psalm in part.
Donati.

Ad Tit. 3. 10.

L. 2. con. Don.
6.5.

" which Eternal Mysteries are comprehended, which carnal man cannot yet conceive. The first Hereſie aroſe
 " amongſt Chriſt's Diſciples from the refusal of yielding
 " to his words, which ſeemed hard, they unhappily made
 " a Schiſm from him: If *Peter* ſtuck ſtedfaſt to Chriſt,
 " was it by underſtanding the high Myſteries of that
 " Speech of Chriſt? No; but *he piously believed what he underſtood not: Learn little ones of Chriſt, learn from hence due Piety*; for thoſe who will diſpute of Myſteries they do
 " not underſtand, do but heighten their Pride, whil'ſt
 " that curſe falls on them which the Royal Prophet ſpeaks
 " of in the 130 *Psalm*, If I was not humble of heart, but
 " have ſwelled up my mind with Pride, as the Child
 " weaned from the breſt is towards his Mother, ſo be my
 " Soul puniſhed. The Church of God is that Mother from
 " which they are ſeſevered; they ſhould have been nurs'd
 " and fed by her, and ſo might have grown and become
 " capable of digeſting the Word and Myſteries of Faith.
 " Ponder then well the ſenſe of thoſe two words of your
 " Creed, *Catholic Church*; obſerve what a certain death
 " ſeizes the Vine-branch, how it withers when lopt off
 " from the Body of the Vine; come and ſeek Life from
 " the Root; number the Prieſts in *St. Peter's Chair*;
 " obſerve how they have ſucceeded to one another: that's
 " the Rock which the proud Gates of Hell never conquer.
 This was his method of reducing thoſe better-diſpoſed
 Souls which erred by miſtake rather than by malice; but
 if he found any obdurate, before he ſhaked againſt them
 the duſt of his feet, according to Chriſt's Command, be-
 fore he avoided them as already condemned, following
 the Apoſtles Counſel; he with a true Charity, weeping
 for the certain danger they ran, minded them of it
 thus: *To be fond of ones proper Opinion, or to be averſe
 from better, to that degree as to be guilty, by breaking Com-
 munion, of the Sacrilege of Schiſm or Hereſie, is a Preſump-
 tion beyond all others, but the Devils*; ſince it is to reſuſe a
 Submiſſion to the Spirit of Truth, guiding that Church
 it is promiſed unto, and which God commands all to
 hearken

hearken unto, and to obey. 'Tis the Crime of *Corah*, erecting an Altar against an Altar, which involves the weak and ignorant Followers as much as the Leaders, when equally stubborn in standing to their Separation; it seeming even a higher Crime in unlearned men, who pretend not to extraordinary Parts, and yet presume to be Judges of, and to condemn the Universal Church, preferring to her Decisions the opposite Errors of a few of her revolted Children. I do not despair of the Salvation of any one in particular, whether he be a great Sinner in the Church, or a Schismatic out of it. Judgment is reserved to God alone; he only who hath in his hands the Iron Rod, can break the Earthen Vessels: but I equally declare of both, with the Apostle, That neither those who in the true Church die in sin, nor those who through a stiff stubbornness die out of her Communion, shall be saved: "For whoever shall be found out of it, will be an Alien, "not reckoned amongst the Children of God, whom he "shall not have for Father, having refused to have the "Church for his Mother. That Catholic Church which "only is the Body of Christ, of which He is the "Head, whereof He alone is the Savior; out of that "Body no one receives Life from God's Holy Spirit, nor "consequently can pretend to an Eternal one. *Out of this Churches Unity no one can attain to true Penance*; no "one can obtain remission of sins, (her Children alone "being the sole Dispensers of the Mysteries of God.) In "Her House only the Lamb is eaten; that is, on Her "Altars only is sacrificed the true Victim of our Redeem- "er, (which alone so applies to us the saving Sacrifice of "the Cross, that who eats not of that Flesh hath no Life "in him.) *As then no one escaped the Deluge, who was not "in Noah's Ark, so no one shall be saved, who is not a "Member of the Church, out of which an Heretic may "have all things but Salvation*: He may have the Sacra- "ments, he may keep the Gospel, he may have the Faith; "and preach it, only Salvation he cannot have. Tho' "he be a *Paul* converted by God's Voice, instructed from "Heaven,

L. de Bapt. con
Donat. c. 16.
L. 2. contra c. 23.

De symb. ad Ca-
techum. c. 10.

Traët. 32. sup.
Joan.
Salvator corporis
sui,
L. de verâ & falsi-
pam. c. 12.

Ser. 181. de tem-
pore.

Q. Q. 75. ad
ora. Q. 52.
Contra Petili, ut
supra.

Ad Bonifacium
cont. 2. Ep. Pelag.

De fide ad Pet.
c. 39.

Epistola 45. de
Donatistis.

Serm. 14. de ver-
bis Dom.

In Psal. 17. In
venire Ecclesie
veritas manet,
quisquis ab hoc
separatus fuerit,
necesse est ut falsa
loquatur.

"Heaven, he must first be sent to those who can admini-
"ster to him the Sacraments, and enter him a Member
"into the Church's Body. Tho' he be a pious *Cornelius*,
"an Alms-giver, a man of Prayer, a sober Liver; tho'
"he have an Angel to instruct him, *Peter* must teach him,
"and admit him into the Kingdom of God upon Earth,
"of which he hath the Keys, (the Church) before he
"can be saved: otherwise, let him observe all the Com-
"mandments, live a chaste life to the purity of an entire
"Virginity, be profuse in Alms-giving, most patient in
"bearing with all Injuries; let him sell all, and give to
"the Poor, reserving nothing for himself: *after all those*
"*seemingly laudable actions, yet if he be not of the true and*
"*Catholic Faith, when he departs this life he will meet a cer-*
"*tain Damnation, altho' he should shed his Blood for the*
"*Name of Christ.* Say not that *Cyprian* and his Church,
"because they condemned no man, and separated none
"from their Communion, were not Heretics, and that it
"may suffice you that you copy this Example: That was
"enough when the Church had not yet decided the Di-
"spute, to whose Decision *Cyprian* had certainly submit-
"ted himself, and with her condemned all her Opposers,
"which you do not. Say not that you err in no *Funda-*
"*mentals*; that you conceive it a thing indifferent unto
"what Party you joyn your selves, supposing they be
"Christians, and therefore remain fixed to that Party in
"which you were born: for whatsoever in particular the
"Opinions of Heretics and Schismatics be, since they pro-
"fess otherwise than the Church does, and requires of
"them to do, they are in a state of Damnation, because
"they renounce thereby one fundamental Article of Faith, the
"Authority and Unity of the Catholic Church, in whose bo-
"som Truth dwells. So that whosoever is removed from
"it, 'tis necessary that he be in Error. Say not, I am
"satisfied, my conscience doth not reproach me that I
"am in an Error. I am charitably persuaded others may
"also serve God well; but many Mysteries in the Catholic
"Church appearing to me very strange, how can I believe
"what

what I understand not? or how shall I, an unlearned person, ever satisfy my self of the Truth? 'Tis then better for me to live of that Religion my Father and Mother were of, and die in that Church which I was Christened in. Such weak reasons, which yet retain in Heresie the greatest part of those who are unhappily engaged in it, betray equally the weakness of their Judgment, and headstrong stubbornness of their Will. The whole Catholic Church of all Ages, of all Nations, in her General Councils, rests satisfied of the Truth of each Article of Catholic Belief, so as to Curse and Excommunicate all those who believed as you do, in opposition to her. Now there is an ease and satisfaction which proceeds from Ignorance, (such as is in him who in a dark night walks without fear on the brim of a Precipice he knows nothing of) another from Knowledge; and can you think, without the highest Presumption, that Ignorance lay on the whole Church's side, and Science in your private Gift? Is it charity to think all those General Councils were most uncharitable, which all said *Anathema* to the Errors which they condemned, and you now approve? "True Faith involves Mysteries which usually scandalize ignorant Souls, and careless in seeking Instruction, that is, the greatest part of the World, because *they can be plausibly argued against, but not so easily made clear, they would not otherwise be Mysteries of Faith.* 'Tis then not only most to be counsel'd, to believe what you see not yet the reason of, since you acknowledge your self unlearned, ignorant, not able to judge in such Debates; and by Faith to manure your Soul, and to fit it to receive and improve the Seed of Truth: but 'tis so absolutely necessary, that by no other method health can be restored to a sick mind. Are you ignorant? not able by your own Judgment to determine on what side the Truth lies? Why then 'tis evident that you are bound to leave all those Congregations which leave you to your own final Decision, and to repair to that Church which alone gives you an Infallible Guide. Think well of God's infinite

Sunt ibi quidam
q. 2. subfendunt
animos. I. natus de
negligentes sui,
que maxima tur-
ba est; popula-
riter accusari pos-
sunt, defendi au-
tem populariter,
propter mysteria
que his continen-
tur, non à multis
a. modum pos-
sunt. c. 2. de util.
Cred.

Credere ante ra-
tione, cum per-
cipiendæ rationi
non sis idoneus.
& ipsa si se exco-
lere animum ex-
cipiendis semini-
bus ventatis, non
solum saluberrim-
um judicio; sed
tale sine quo ægris
animis salus redi-
re non potest.

Non est desperandum ab eodem ipso Deo auctoritatem aliquam constitutam, quæ velut cetero gradu innitentes attollamur ad Deum, Epist. 36. Immobili auctoritati.

Vere illa rectissima disciplina est in aciem fidei quam maxime recipi infirmos ut pro illis jam fidissime positis, firmissima ratione pugnetur.

Salutem beatitudinis extra eam neminem vel percipere vel tenere, De bapt. cont. Don. l. 4. c. 2.

"nite mercy, and true desire that you should be saved,
 "and never despair to find an Authority established by God
 "himself, from which, as from a secure step, we may take
 "our rise to God. Heretics offer Reasons and Arguments
 "for proof of their Belief, and pretend by them to be
 "prefer'd to the *immovable Authority of the Church*, which
 "is so firmly established; therein lies the rashness com-
 "mon to all Heretics: But the most meek Lord of our
 "Faith hath been pleased to strengthen his Church with
 "an Authority far weightier than that of all others; into
 "this Castle of the Faith all the weaker ought to with-
 "draw themselves, whilst for them, thus secure, others
 "fight with invincible Reasons and Proofs. You are
 "willing to be guided by so weak an Authority as that of
 "your Father and Mother; and will you refuse to be gui-
 "ded by the pious Examples of all their Ancestors, and of
 "the whole Church for fourteen hundred years? "As for
 "your Baptism, in it you were christened a Catholic,
 "whoever baptized you; and by declaring your self a
 "Catholic, you restore your self to the Religion you
 "were christened in: For the Catholic Church is like un-
 "to Paradise, the Waters of whose Fountain could be
 "drunk out of it in the Rivers that streamed out; but that
 "Baptism being given and belonging only to the Catholic
 "Church, *as in Paradise only could be enjoyed temporal hap-*
 "*piness, so no one purchases or maintains a Right to eternal*
 "*happiness out of that Church.* Thus did this holy Saint
 endeavor to draw back to the true Church's Communion
 those more stubborn Heretics, creating in them that holy
 Fear of God, which is the beginning of Wisdom. Christian
 Brethren, you who are so happy as to have been born in,
 or early called to the Bosom of this holy Catholic Church,
 and thereby to enjoy that Blessing with less toil and labor
 than it cost *S. Augustin*; Be ever thankful for so great a
 Mercy; wonder not when you see knowing Men, sober
 Enquirers, who, even after a studious search, have so thick
 a Veil yet over their eyes, as not to see those glorious evi-
 dent Marks God hath distinguished this Church by, nor
 their

their Obligation of rendring themselves Members of it. For twenty years *Augustin*, a man of far greater Parts, and a more diligent Searcher, was thus blind. Pity those who pin their Faith on the Sleeve, bottom it on the Authority of some such particular men, whilst they refuse to give ear to the whole Catholic Church, which assures them that they go astray. Pray for both, obtain a Ray of Grace for them, and they will see as you do, judge as you do, and equally bless God for it. If any here present enjoy not yet that happiness, may the Example and Motives of this Saint's Conversion prevail with him. Let him weigh whether he be not unhappily under the same prejudices this Saint was so long prepossessed with. 'Tis in vain to consult many Books or Persons on each point of Belief: "Alas! says the Saint, taught by twenty years experience, the helps of all sorts of Instructions received from Man avail little, if God work not in us that very effect which we expect from them. Seek, then, Knowledge from God by a devout and humble Prayer, but expect not that he should give you a new Revelation, or lead you to Truth, but by those Guides his admirable Providence hath provided for you. Resolve your Faith finally into God's Word; but that you may not be deceived, hear it from the Mouth, receive it by the Authority of that Church you are commanded to hearken unto. Thus did this holy Doctor, offering to those Heretics, who questioned the Grounds of his Faith, these evident Marks by which God hath character'd his Church, that Pillar of Truth on which all the Faithful are to lean. If any stubbornly refuse to observe them, they will allow me however to offer them to the Catholic part of my Auditory for their comfort. This is then the account he gives of his own and our Faith: "*Many things do most justly detain me in the Bosom of the Catholic Church; First, the Union in Faith, and consent of many Nations.* 'Tis the common misery of all Heretics not to see what of all things in the world is most patent, and seated in the very eyes of all Nations, to wit the Church; out of the Unity

C2

whereof,

De Doctrina Ch.
c. 16.

In Epist. Fund.
cap. 4, & 5.

Ro. 2. 17. contra
Parricid. c. 3.

I. de Symbolo
cap. 5.

Tract. 3. in Ep.
Joann.

Serm. de temp.
169.

Brevic. contra
Donatistas.
Acutum aliquid
sibi dicere viden-
tur cum Catholi-
ce nomen non ex
totius Orbis com-
munionem inter-
pretantur, sed ob-
servatione Prece-
ptorum omnium.
L. contra Parm.
multa Frustra de
Uno Fructo.

Ecclesia Catholica
est una, non potest
esse divisa nec
scissa in diversas
partes. Epist. 47.
Dicendum est quæ
vel ubi sit una Ec-
clesia quia præter
unam altera non
est. L. 1. cont. Don.

"whereof, whatever they do, can no more cover their
"Souls from the anger of God, than a Cobweb could pre-
"serve their Bodies from cold. That Church which eve-
"ry where opposing different Heresies, can never be con-
"quered by them. They all went out of Her, like unto
"so many withered Branches cut off from, and cast out
"of the Vine, whilst She remains in her own Vine, ad-
"hering to her own Root, enjoying her Charity, or per-
"fect Union. In her alone we hold the Inheritance of
"Christ (all Nations :) They have it not whose Commu-
"nion unites not the *whole Circle of the Earth*; who is not
"in Communion with that Inheritance, is gone out of it :
"Such may challenge Christ, but to as little purpose as he
"who in the Gospel made this address to him; Say, O
"Lord, to my Brother, that he divide the Inheritance
"with me: Christ refused to divide it amongst them.
"Paul was as great an Enemy to Division, when he said,
"I beg of you, Brethren, that you say all of you the same
"thing, and that there be no Schisms amongst you: He
"wept for those, who, tho' on his account, divided Christ.
"See then how wicked those men are who will be divided! They
"think themselves witty, when seeing their Congrega-
"tion restrained within the bounds of some Province or
"Kingdom, they pretend that they be a *part of the Catho-
"lic Church*, that hath all things commanded and necessa-
"ry for Salvation, as if to be a Catholic did not import a
"Communion or Unity in Faith and Sacraments, in a
"Church diffused the whole World over. They cut off a
"part, and that again falls into many pieces, tho' no ne-
"cessity can warrant a rent from the Unity, tho' Christ's Gar-
"ment was seamless, and fell to the Lot of one, because all
"that belong to it are gathered into a perfect Unity: No,
"the Catholic Church is but one; *it cannot be divided, nor*
"*cut into different parts*: And, Where is that Church?
"ought to be our sole Quære; for besides that One, there
"is not another. It is in those good, faithful, and true
"Servants of God, where-ever diffused, joyned not only
"by a Spiritual Union, but in the same Communion of
Sacra-

"Sacraments ; whereas all the Congregations, or rather
 "Divisions, which call themselves Churches of Jesus
 "Christ, and which are divided from, and opposite to one
 "another, and Enemies to the *Congregation of Unity*, which
 "is the true Church, belong not to Her, tho' they bear her
 "Name ; they might belong to her if the Holy Ghost
 "were divided against himself. We may then say to each,
 "If those of Our Communion be the Church of Christ, those of
 "Yours be not the Church of Christ : For which-ever be the
 "Church of Christ, 'tis but ONE, of which 'tis said, *One*
 "is my Dove. I will then never hear those who lead to a
 "Division of Religions or Churches, saying *Here is Christ*,
 "and *There is Christ*. Secondly, *I am kept in that Church by*
 "*her Authority, grounded on Miracles, led by Hope*, (that
 "Hope which moves the Members of that Church to pur-
 "chase Eternal Glory, promised as a Reward by our just
 "Judge to meritorious Actions) *increased by Charity*.
 "Thirdly, *because that Authority of Hers is back'd by her conti-*
 "*nuation and Antiquity* ; all other Congregations having had
 "their decay long since, or their beginning so lately, that
 "their precise Age, the place of their Birth, the very names
 "of their Fathers, are known ; whilst She, founded on the
 "Prince of the Apostles, with an infallible promise, That
 "the Gates of Hell shall never prevail against Her, That
 "Christ will ever dwell in Her, hath continued these seven-
 "teen Ages defended from Error by him whose Sanctity and
 "Mercy could not otherwise have absolutely commanded us
 "to submit to her Direction, under the pain of belonging as
 "little to him as the very Heathens. Fourthly, *by the Suc-*
 "*cession of Priests in the Seat of Peter to this present Bishop*.
 "Behold the Title *Roman*, importing a continued Successi-
 "on of 244 Teachers legally sent from God, an Union with
 "the Pastor of the *one only Flock*, the Vicar of Christ ; *whose*
 "*Authority is so Sacred, that in differences about Religion, when*
 "*he has pass'd Sentence, the case is out of question, tho' the Error*
 "*continue ; so unerring, at least when that Voice of the Church*
 "*is owned by her representative Body, that if an Angel from*
 "*Heaven should require from us to abandon the Church in which*
 "that

Spirituali Unitate
 devindis in ca-
 dem Communionis
 Sacramentorum de
 Bapt. contra Don.
 l. 7. c. 51.
 Si nostra Com-
 munitio est Ecclesia
 Christi, vestra
 Communio non
 est Ecclesia Chri-
 sti, &c.
 Serm. 11. de ver-
 bis Dom. cap. 23.
 Qui ad Religio-
 num, si esset eis tra-
 ducunt, cont.
 c. c. l. 3.

Matt. 16.]

Romae responsis
 venerunt causa
 finita est actum
 error finitatur.

Fo. 7. in Pisl.
 cont. pars. Don.
 & To. 3. Ep. 164.

that Succession is found, we ought to return him no other Answer but an Anathema. In five, the very name of Catholic detains me in her Communion, &c. A Name she only hath ever owned! Such was the Blessed Saint's Profession of Faith, a Record of Truth thirteen Ages old, and so plain and convincing, that he doubted not to address himself thus to the dissenting Sectaries of his time: "Can we be unwilling and slow to repair to the Bosom of that Church, which hath ever been maintained in the height of an absolute Authority, even by the general acknowledgment and consent of all Mankind, by the continual Succession of Bishops in the See Apostolic, against the opposition raised by so great a number of Heresies, which have bark'd in vain against her, and which have been condemned by the unanimous voice of Nations, by the Grace and Judicious Censure of Councils, by the Glory and Majesty of Miracles; so that not to yield to her Prerogative, is an infallible Mark of an extreme Impiety, or a prodigious Arrogancy.

Letus return to *Augustin*. Grace hath gained a half Victory, the Battel is renewed hotter and more stubborn than before; he is convinced, but not converted; his Understanding yields, but his Heart revolts; that poor Heart was driven by contrary Winds: known Truth press'd him to profess it, his affection to some darling Sins, and to a fancied Reputation, held him back. "He deferred (as he owns) from day to day to live to God, whil'st without delay he died to himself. My Savior, (says he again) that is, the true way, pleased me, but it was narrow, and I had not strength enough to break into it.---I sigh'd after Liberty, but my Chains fell not off; those Iron Chains which my own will had made, and shackl'd me in, by which my Enemy held me fast.---My sinful Affections, weak in their beginnings, had been heightened into Passion; Passion yielded unto, was grown a Custom, Custom unresisted, was become an unquerable Necessity.---Two Wills, a newly-created one, the Off-spring of Grace, and my old sensual sinful one, strove

Ro. 6. de Util.
Grad. c. 17.

L. 7. Conf. c. 11.

L. 8. Conf. c. 11;
8c cap. 5.

" strove the one against the other, and rent cruelly my
 " martyr'd Soul.---I now suffered with pain what I had
 " wrought in my self with delight, and my sinful Will
 " uncontrouled had led me further than I would, before, I
 " coloured my backwardness in sacrificing my Vanities and
 " Human concerns to those of Religion, with this excuse,
 " that I waited but for a fair unquestionable discovery of
 " the Truth; and now that I had it in my sight, I found
 " my self chained up, and even afraid that my Chains and
 " Excuses should fall off together.---My half-resolutions
 " of rising and following you, my Lord, were like those
 " of one half asleep: No one would be content to sleep
 " always, all judge 'tis better to be awake, and up; yet a
 " drowzy head is loth to shake off a pleasant fit of sleep
 " when the hour of rising calls: So it was with me; I was
 " convinced it was fit and just that I should yield to your
 " Grace; my Judgment press'd me to it: but soft Plea-
 " sures to be renounced, my Reputation to be blasted by
 " my Enemies, my Sincerity to be questioned by my Friends,
 " enslaved my Will. You clearly laid open before me that
 " Truth which you invited me to avouch; it was too plain
 " to be disputed against: yet no answer could I return
 " but those dull and drowzy words, Shortly, yea present-
 " ly, leave me but a moment; but that *presently* was ne-
 " ver present, that *shortly* lasted long, that *moment* was
 " eternal. Behold the sad Picture of a Soul that hath not
 " yet lost all pretence to eternal Bliss, yet so dull'd by her sins,
 " so debauch'd by weak human fears, as to dare to stray from
 " the way to it, against the loud and clamorous convictions of
 " her own conscience. A sad case! and at that time that of
 " *Augustin*. Great God!, that Souls, created to possess an
 " Everlasting Bliss, should be baffled out of all claim to it,
 " by such poor, childish, weak fears! He was to *change*,
 " forsooth! to alter his first Sentiment he had so often de-
 " clared to the World! He, that Learned Man, was to lay
 " down his old Errors, *to be catechiz'd*, to learn (a little one
 " in Christ) the first Elements of Religion, *to take up a new*
 " Faith; what would the World say? how sinistrously
 " would

Verba lenta &
 somnolenta, modo
 ecce modo, sine
 paululum, sed mo-
 do & modo non
 habebat modum,
 & illud paululum
 ibat in longum.

would they misrepresent his Motives? Weakness of men! who dare act against their conscience, lest the World should think they do. This misery the Saint reflected on afterwards, when he cried out, "A curse on thee, swelling River of human Respects! who shall bear up against thy Stream? who shall ford thee? what powerful Grace of God shall drain or dry thee up, and open me a passage? God directed *Augustin* to a holy Bishop, *Sedulius*, who had been a Spiritual Guide and Father to *St. Ambrose*; by this Man's means God had designed to defeat this one great Difficulty at least, which was so dreadful an Obstacle to *Augustin's* Conversion. His Exhortations had long been ineffectual, when God inspired him to relate to *Augustin* the late Conversion of one *Pictorinus*: You knew him at *Rome*, said the holy Bishop, you have often convers'd with him, and heard him both in the School and at the Bar; you know that for his eminent Parts and prodigious Rhetoric, he was highly valued, so far beyond all others, that *Rome* had raised him a Statue in the most eminent place of the City, as to the God of Eloquence: He was the Darling of the Nobility, the Glory of the Senate, the Love of the People, and wanted towards Happiness only (alas! the all indeed) true Religion. He was now far advanced in Age, when by reading all those Books that were written by those of the Catholic Church, God's Grace instructing him interiorly, he came to the knowledge of the Truth. But he was Head of a contrary Party, or at least the most considered in it. 'Twas hard to quit that sweet Præ-eminence, and to have a new Interest to make. He would often tell me, not in public, but in private and familiar discourse, That now he was converted, and of my Religion: I ever answered him, That he deceived himself, and that I should never rank him amongst those of it, till I saw him in their Church, at their Prayers, at their Sacraments. He would reply, That God knew his heart; and what, said he, do the Walls of a Church make one a Christian? This was but a fond excuse; alas he feared to offend his Friends; to cast a blur upon that fair

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

Confess. l. i. c. 16.

fair Reputation with them which he had gained to himself. God pitied him at last ; he apply'd himself to Reading again, and to fervent Prayer ; he inflamed his cold Desires, reinforced his Resolutions ; and, fearing not to be acknowledged by Christ before his holy Angels, in case he blushed to confess him before Men ; He (that great Master of the Literate World!) abandoned his old Errors, which almost all the *Roman* Nobility and People were again infected with ; and, tho' he knew that those tall Cedars of *Libanus* would fall heavy on him, that his Friends would forsake him, his Admirers ridicule him, his best Supporters abandon him, he did not blush to become a little one of Christ, *ashamed of his past Errors, not of the Truth he was to embrace* ; he suddenly, unexpectedly, declares to me, that he will go to a Catholic Church. With what joy did I lead him ! Thither come, he refused to be privately admitted into our Communion ; he made a public Profession of his Faith, calling the whole Multitude for Witnesses of the Mercy which God had shewed him. This Example thus related by the holy Bishop, Oh how powerful was it ! " I burnt, says *Augustin*, interiorly " with a violent desire suddenly to copy and follow it ; " I address'd myself to God in most fervent Prayers ; Do, " O Lord, said I, do the same in my heart, awake and pull " it back to you. His Prayer was heard, human respects are totally laid aside by him, nay he is convinced that nothing but Error, or Weakness in not daring to disavow and to correct it, ought to be blushed at. One great point more God's Grace hath gained ; now we are come to the last. No wonder if the Enemy, intrenched in his last Fort, makes the most vigorous, because 'tis the last, resistance.

From the beginning of his Youth *Augustin* had found strange Charms (as he acknowledges himself) in Virtue, especially in that of Temperance and Chastity ; but corrupted Nature found stronger, and more tempting ones, in Vice. His Prayer was then, Lord, give me Temperance, Continency, Chastity, *but not too soon*. In this disposition had he continued till his Thirty-third year, convinced of

Da mihi const.
continentiam & casti-
tatem, sed non
modo, Conf. 2.
97.

his Duty, but unwilling to comply yet with it. Catholic Religion he liked well of; but with it the Cross of Christ was to be embraced, Abstinences, Penitential Works, Confession, Restitution, and Self-denial, Purity of Heart and Body, a removal of all dangerous occasions of sinning. "Oh (saith he) the Beauty of thy Law was to me "greatly attractive! but I sunk back with grief under "my own weight, the violence of old sensual Customs.

Qui intelligit Deum, & non accedit ad Fidem ejus, ne vivat Christianus, sed in sine vult Fidem accipere ut moriatur Christianus, qualem sperat Deum cum militare eruberit vult ab eo stipendium accipere. Q. Q. ver. & nov. Q. 126.

Oh of how many is this the case, when called by God to the true Church; or, if in it already, to Christian Virtues! But a sad one! For, as *Augustin* himself observed afterwards, "Those who being sufficiently convinced when "true Faith is taught, yet refuse to submit to it; *resolved* "not to live, yet hoping to die in it, can have but one of these "two Motives of their delay; either a greater liberty of "sinning, with less restraint, with a weaker remorse, during Life; or the confusion they apprehend to be put to "by that change. But, alas! what a God do they conceive

"you to be, O Lord, who blush to serve you, yet dare expell "from you a reward? The force of this Example had conquer'd in *Augustin* the difficulty he met with from human respects; God uses the same to cure his last and inmost Wound, Sinful Customs. *Potinian*, a Noble African, and Friend of his, who followed the Emperor's Court, renders him a Visit, and finding *S. Paul's* Epistles opened in his Study, express'd the joy he had to see him bestow so well his best hours. Their conversation thus falling on a pious Subject, *Potinian* takes an occasion to rehearse the eminent Virtues practis'd, and the wonderful Miracles wrought, by *S. Anthony*, not long before deceased, and so famous thro' all the East, even whilst living, that the Great *Theodosius* had often begged the Protection of his Prayers for his Empire and Army, and granted that he owed to them the Prosperity of the one, and the Victories of the other. *Augustin* wondred at the Greatness of those Miracles of so fresh a date, of so unquestionable a Truth, wrought in the true Faith in the Catholic Church, and stood amazed he had never observed, or even known them before.

Tam recenti memoria, & prope nostris temporibus testatissima miracula tua in fide recta & Catholica Ecclesia.

fore. A great Motive to unite himself with it, in that Communion for which she had that Hand and Seal of God to shew. From this great Guide, and Father of solitary Eremita and devout Religious, the Discourse pass'd to his holy Followers, and the most flourishing Monasteries, and Religious Cloysters, which *Augustin* could not but acknowledge to be a peculiar Flock of Christ endued with singular Piety; their Number and eminent Piety were a second Motive to embrace the Faith which they, such eminent Conquerors of the World, and exact Followers of Christ, did profess. *Povinian* finding him much moved, adds Fuel to this well-kindled Fire, by a relation of what he had been a witness of when the Court was at *Treves*. I went, said he, with three other Courtiers to view some neighboring Eremita Cells and Gardens; the Company was divided, two entering a Cell, where dwelt some of those *Servants of God, poor in Spirit, to whom, by that claim, the Kingdom of Heaven belongs*, found on the Table S. *Anthony's* Life; they opened and read it, and God representing by his interior Grace, in a far more lively way than the dead Letter could, the Virtues of his Servant, the one of them, an Agent in Court, inspired with a holy Love for Virtue, and ashamed of his so different a Life; What drive our hopes at, says he? What flatters most our wishes? It is, that we may perhaps gain our Princes Favor; 'tis but a *perhaps*; many dangers will way-lay us before we reach it, and then that height is slippery, and threatens a fore bruise in the fall; whereas in this very moment I may, if I will, enter into a particular Friendship and Intimacy with my God. Full of these thoughts, he recollects his discomposed mind, opens the Book again, and his heart at the same time to the Divine Seed of God's Grace, which took root presently, and the Fruit soon appeared: God altered interiorly the whole frame of his Soul, broke all his Chains, sever'd him from the World: He sighs, and reads, and sighs again; he ballances, resolves, rises, and now God's Courtier: The strife is at an end, says he, adieu Court and World, none of my hopes are

Nihil mutari
a peccatis, flevit
se ramen.

Remanerat muta
respidatio & qua-
si mortem retor-
midabat restringi
à fluxu consuetu-
dinis . quo tabes-
cebat in mortem.
Conf. 1. 3. c. 8.

now lodged in thee, 'tis God only I will serve; 'tis resolv-
ed, and that at this hour, in this place; and adieu Friend
also, unless you have taken the same resolution. He had;
both rich enough, by that general resolution of sacrificing
all to God, begun to build happily that Noble Tower of
Christian Perfection. How surprized were we, when ha-
ving but viewed some neighboring Gardens, we found
them so altered in so short a time! so fix'd in their new re-
solutions! If we were not *otherwise* altered, having heard
their Choice and their Motives, *so far* we were at least, as
to weep for our weakness and insensibility. We did con-
gratulate their happiness, envy their condition, crave
their Prayers, and brought home with us a heavy heart,
too too unseparably wedded to this World, whilst those
dwelt in mind in Heaven, in Body in their narrow Cells.
Whilst *Potinian* related this passage, what a storm was
raised in *Augustin's* breast! who compared his wavering
delays, with the firm resolutions; his deafness to God's
Voice, with the quick obedience of these his Servants. In
vain he cast himself behind his own back, and turned away
his eyes, God placed him still in his own sight, and unco-
vered the old Sores of his lasting Sins. Not bearing with
these interior reproaches, as soon as *Potinian* had left him
he betakes himself to a Garden to divert those thoughts:
His intimate Friend *Alipius* followed him; God's Graces
pursue thither their Fugitive, and renew a brisk Attaque
against that struggling heart. There, is exposed unto him,
how certain he is now that 'tis God who calls and presses
him to obey: He had nothing to answer, all his put-offs
and excuses failed him; a stubborn silence had succeeded, a
strange fear seized him; he apprehended more than
Death to divest himself of those ill habits that poisoned
his Soul to Death. In these violent Convulsions of his
mind, he starts back towards his Friend, and seizing him,
"What is this, *Alipius*? (says he.) What did we hear?"
"Unlearned illiterate people rise and seize on Heaven,
"and We with all our eminent Parts and Knowledge, for
"want of Courage, behold we wallow in the sink of our
sins.

"*sins.* Are we ashamed then to follow? Should we not rather blush than we do not. He that should now they have opened the way? His troubled and wandering eyes, his discomposed and dejected looks, his pale countenance, and faltering voice, spoke to the rest of his mind. He was sinking into a kind of swoon, in which he lay, (as he calls it;) He lay down, dispirited with himself even to passion, to see that he could not persuade himself effectually to make his peace with his God, by a full submission to his preventing Graces; and all the pressure of his Soul violently led him to it, while his Reason's Will abandoned him, and withdrew; that he would, and could not resolve; 'twas but a half-will that drew again the other wounded half, still panting and withdrawing back. His disordered Soul suffered strangely in this strife! He pluck'd the hair off his Head, knock'd factiously his Forehead and Breast; with forced hands he clasp'd his Knees, then said, How easily all the parts of my Body obey my Soul! How they move at her Will, and my Soul cannot obey her own Commands! She would resolve, she asks with a more violent passion that resolution from her self, yet cannot obtain it. 'Tis I myself that would, and I myself that will not. God's merciful Graces pursue him with quick remorses, by a favouring severity and tender cruelty, press him with threats & with promises, suggesting to him, *That now was the fatal moment of which Eternity depended, now his Chains were to be broken, and if they were slackened, or never, in case he let his Passions drag him them again.* He strove, and said to himself, *Now, now, be it now done; yet it was not done.* Being now within one Step of Peace of Mind, Joy, and Security, by a final Victory, he suffered in his Soul the most violent pangs; he fell not back, nor yet dared to advance. In this critical minute his ill Customs, those old Acquaintances, as he terms them, his past Vanities, sinful Pleasures, and now expiring Liberty, faintly pulling him, as by the Sleeve, said, And wilt thou quit us? From this moment, for ever? And canst thou (think'st thou) live with-

Imperat animus
ut velle animus
pen alter est, non
facit, non est vo-
luntatem utiq;
plena imperat,
ideo non est quod
imperat.

Flagella ingemi-
nans timoris &
pudoris, he rursus
cessarem & non
abrumperetur id
ipsum exequium &
tenue quod re-
maneret & ex-
lescerat iterum &
me nobiliss all-
garet.

with-

Quid in te fiat &
non fiat? prope
et secutus in eum,
non se subtrahet
ut eam, prope
in eum, exci-
pente, & sana-
bit e.

without us? Ever hereafter under a constraint, ever checking, ever denying thy self? Grace, for a last supply, offered to his thoughts the Example of so many Servants of God, even of the weaker Sex, of tender Years, who had sacrificed and suffered more to purchase Eternal Bliss. "These and these could, said he, and thou canst not. Did God prevent them by his Grace co-operating with them; and art thou the only One whom God will abandon, returning to him? Why dost thou rely on thy own Strength, or fear thy own Weakness? Cast, cast thy self into his Arms who calls thee; he will not draw back, and let thee fall. Cast thy self into his Bosom; he will receive thee there, and cure thee. The Storm grew higher; two Showers of Tears followed, a sign that it was high clearing up. He could not bear the presence even of *Alipius*; alas, he could not brook his own! He runs under a Figtree, (with such Leaves *Adam* covered his Nakedness!) there prostrate on the ground, bathed in his Tears, he sobb'd and sigh'd, then gave vent to his grief in these broken words: "How long, my God, shall I be the Object of your Anger, the Butt of your Justice? When will the Ray of Mercy shine? How long shall I say *to morrow, to morrow*? Why not now? Why not at this instant an end to my sinful life? *Augustin*, Jesus sees thee under that Figtree, as well as he did *Nahamiel*, before thou seest him: His Mercy it is founds there so deep thy Wound, only that the Cure may be perfect; that hereafter, fruitful in Pious Deeds, thou must escape the Curse that fell on the barren Figtree. The happy moment is come, written in the Book of God's Mercy from all Eternity. A Voice is heard, *Take up and read, Take up and read*: He obeys, finding *S. Paul's* Epistles by him, he lights on the 13 *Rom.* 13. God guiding his hands and eyes there he reads, *Not in Feasting and Drunkenness, nor in Chamberings and Lechery, nor in Strife and Emulation, but put on our Lord Jesus Christ, and pamper not the Flesh, gratifying its Desires.* These

These words he had read often, but now a Ray of Grace writ the sense of them in his mind, and stamped them in his heart. In a moment a comfortable Light, breathing Security and Joy, spread it self into his Soul: His Tears were wiped off, his Doubts resolved, his Fears and his Anxiety vanished; he rose a SAINT inflamed with the Love of God, begins his Apostolical Labors by inviting his Friend *Alipius* to a like zealous Conversion, who had been all the while a dumb Spectator, and who to shew the Riches and Varieties of God's Graces fitted to all Tempers, without reluctance, without strife or difficulty, surrendered himself at the reading only of the Sentence following in *S. Paul*, *Receve, and take him along with you, who is weak in Faith.*

*Infernum in Fide
assumit.*

I should now open unto you, Christian Brethren, the Riches of God's Mercies heaped on this Saint; shew you his great steps towards an eminent Virtue, and the fulness of the Reward that attended it, even here, by that serenity of mind, those interior Joys, which he often conceived to be of the same Nature with the Bliss of Saints in Heaven, and short of them only in Length. But my Glass is at the lowest ebb, my time expired: I shall trespass no longer on Your Sacred Majesty's Royal Patience. I will end with a transient consideration on the Fruit of this whole Discourse, which hangs on these three Truths. *First*, That we can do nothing without a continual supply of God's Grace, and therefore ought with assiduous Prayer to press upon God's Bounty for it. *Secondly*, That Divine Grace once granted enables us to do all things, and that it is never denied when duly asked; whence it follows, that we ought without the least fear to undertake whatever God moves us unto. *Thirdly*, That Grace requires a speedy and diligent co-operation, or is soon withdrawn; and consequently, that nothing is so dangerous in the great concerns of our Eternal Salvation, as delays, on whatever account.

*Numquid hoc af-
fec intra in gaudi-
um Domini cal-
Con. 1. 9.*

No

No certainly, nothing available to Virtues here, or Happiness hereafter, can be had without the help of Grace. *S. Augustin* is a plain Instance for it: Twenty years continual endeavors, a studious application of so many Eminent Parts, the Tears of a pious loving Mother, the endeavors of the ablest Divines of *Europe* and *Africa*, could not help him to see an almost self-evident Truth, what way of Worship God hath appointed us to honor him by, and where those means lie which his Mercy hath allowed us, to attain that Bliss we are created for. This Truth being laid open, his Will passionately moving him to declare himself of the Catholic Church, he had not yet the strength to raise it to a Resolution. Oh how truly are *all the Crowns of God's Saints the Works of his Mercy, and his Commiseration on our Weakness!* How truly are all the Merits we can boast of, God's meer Gifts! His own sad experience did teach *S. Augustin* how to express this Truth so fully, so admirably, in his Book of Widows. To will, saith he, is certainly our own Work, if it be true of any thing, it is certainly so of our Will, that 'tis such because we will; and yet what little influence have we over our own Wills, relating to good! It must be awakened and stirr'd, or it lies as in a Lethargy; when awake, it must be healed and strengthened, or the least difficulty and pain overcomes it; when applied, it must be encouraged, enlarged, supported, or it is so very narrow, so feeble, that it sinks after the first offers, under the least weight; and even when we think our selves most resolv'd, most forward, after even many endeavors, we find our hearts very empty of all Virtues, if God hath not himself mercifully placed them there. How long do some continue in Error and in Sin? A constant Object of Gods Hatred and Justice, on the very brim of Hell, unconcerned, and without any sense of their danger! Ah! Gods Grace hath not awakened yet their dull Conscience, lull'd in the sleep of Sin. How many others

behold

Qui resonat re
in misericordia &
misericordiis
suis

Coram munus
suis

Nostri est vel
le, sed voluntas
ipsa & adimpletur
ut lingat, & la
natur ut valeat,
& dilatur ut ca
piat, & imple
tur, ut habeat.
De sicut.

behold their own Misery, and sigh often for it, acknowledge themselves equally criminal and miserable, see themselves sinking deeper and deeper, yet never offer resolutely to release their Souls from, and avoid, those partly incumbent, partly threatening miseries. Alas! they have consumed the Substance and Vigor of their Souls in Sin; those many deep Wounds have impaired their Strength; God's Grace, which only can, hath not yet wrought the cure. How many, in fine, after their Sins are pardoned, and they set in a right way, stumble at the first difficulty, and advance no further; or with little sense, ever full of good Wishes, and empty of Effects? Their narrow and poorly-stock'd Hearts, can receive but little, know less how to improve it, till God by his Grace enlarge and enrich them. Oh then let us ever press, never cease, and may this Grace be all we ask! Let us ever seek, but this Grace only; having ever in our hearts and mouths that frequent Prayer of the Church, O God, be intent on my help! Lord, hasten to succor me!

But again, for our comfort, that help being obtained, with what security may we not attempt the greatest things! with what ease may we not perform them! *S. Augustin* in that happy moment of his Conversion wondred from what dark Den, in which it had been so long locked up from him, his Free-will was restored; such unusual strength he found in himself! It proved a satisfaction, a comfort to him, to want those Pleasures without which he had believed he could not live. How unerringly, through the course of his following Life, did he practise those Virtues whose Names had been unknown to him! 'Tis with Truth you mind us, Great *S. Paul*, That *God works in us both to will and to do*; so little toil and pain is found in the performance, when God's Grace works in us a steady fix'd Resolution: And can we give place to any Anguishes, Fears, Apprehensions, when God offers his Grace by calling us to a true Faith, to a pious Life? His Infinite Mercy is then at hand to create

De quo imo altog:
secreto evocatum
est in momento
liberum arbitrium
meum? 1.9. c. 1.

Qui operatur in
nobis, & vello &
perficere.

in us a Will, his Omnipotency to joyn to it a facility in obeying him. Who hath found a Treasure, forms generous Designs, dares undertake great things, conceives he shall easily remove any obstacle, because that he knows the force of Gold, which in a moment can supply all wants. God's Grace is his Treasure; 'tis the Riches of his Bounty, saith *S. Paul*; in a moment it gives Strength to the Weak, Knowledge to the Dull and Ignorant, Courage to the most Timorous. 'Tis true we can do nothing without God, but 'tis equally true that we can do all things in him that enables us all. We can despise the soft deluding Pleasures of sense, with the Virgins; blot out whatever stains of past sins, by our Tears, with God's penitent Servants; practise with ease all Christian Virtues, with the Confessors; undergo and conquer all sorts of Sufferings for Justice, with the Martyrs. But then let us ever remember that Sentence of *S. Augustin*, God cannot work with us, but when we work ourselves. If Grace be God's hand ever stretched to help us, and work with us; if a Divine Light, able to disperse the greatest Darkness; if a Heavenly Science, exposed to no Error, infused in those who admit of it; if it be an easie conquest of all Vices, and of whatever Opposition to Virtue when used; if it be that with the help whereof all good Saints came to be such. Oh, Christian Brother, what a Treasure hath laid so long hidden in thy heart! and how useless yet! That Grace is the whole Fruit of the Cross of Jesus, thy plentiful effectual Redemption; to neglect it is as deep an Offence as to tread under foot the precious Blood of our Redeemer. Ah! dig up that Treasure then, stir it up, use that Talent, or it will be taken away. How long God will permit it to lie dormant in your hands I know not. He gives it not lavishly, but according to the measure of Christ's Gifts. How soon yours will be filled I know not. If now you hear your self called, answer; if moved, follow; if commanded, obey. Some one Grace, I know, is the

cri-

Divitias bonitatis
ejus.

Jo. 15.
Omnia possum in
eo qui me com-
fortat. *Phil. 4.*

Deus non efficit
eo-operator nisi
in efficit operator.
Aug.

Secundum men-
suram donationis
Christi. *Eph. 4.*

critical one to each mans Salvation; such were those *Samuel* offered to *Saul*, *Nathan* to *David*; the former past by his, and was set aside for ever, an abandoned Reprobate; the latter obeyed his, and became according to God's heart. Whether this day by my voice God hath not presented to some one here the critical Grace, the last loud call, I know not; but this I know, that whoever obeys not his, whoever resolves it not from this moment, ventures his Salvation upon a *perhaps*, than which there cannot be a more certain Folly, scarce a more crying Sin. Use then all that measure which God hath offered you, and your Fidelity will be blest by such an increase of it, as will possess you with a Heavenly Bliss, which God in his Mercy grant us all without end.

Gratiam invenimus in auxilio opportuno. *Heb.* 4. 16.

Ad majorem Dei Gloriam.

F I N I S.